

Marine Turtle Newsletter

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Editor: N. Mrosovsky

Editorial Advisors:

Departments of Zoology
and Psychology
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1A1 Canada

P.C.H. Pritchard
Harold F. Birth

* → A TRANSATLANTIC MOVEMENT OF A HEADSTARTED KEMP'S RIDLEY ← *

Kemp's ridley turtles are confined primarily to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic coastal waters of the United States. However, a few individuals are periodically found along the Atlantic coast of Europe. These turtles are believed to be carried from the Atlantic coastal waters of the United States across the North Atlantic by the gulf Stream (Carr, 1955, 1980; Carr and Caldwell, 1957). Recently, the transatlantic movement of a Kemp's ridley has been documented. This turtle (tag NNN893) had been headstarted for 11 months by the Galveston Laboratory of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), under Mexican permit No. 1147 and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit No. PRT-2-4481. On June 5, 1980 it was released into the Gulf of Mexico near Homosassa, Florida. On December 25, 1981 (569 days after its release) it was found on a beach near Biarritz, France. It was alive but inactive. During the time since its release, it had grown from a weight of 990 g and a carapace length of 18.4 cm to a weight of 2030 g and a carapace length of 23.0 cm. This represents a slow growth rate (1.8 g/day) compared to those of other headstarted Kemp's ridleys that have been recaptured in the Gulf of Mexico and along the Atlantic coast of the United States (mean = 5.8 g/day, n=14).

The NMFS project is only one facet of an international effort to protect Kemp's ridley. Other agencies involved include the Instituto Nacional de Pesca (Mexico), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S.

Navy. We would especially like to acknowledge the efforts of the Instituto Nacional de Pesca.

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THANE WIBBELS

NMFS SEFC Galveston Laboratory, 4700 Avenue U, Galveston, Texas 77550, U.S.A.

Current Address: Department of Biology, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843, U.S.A.